

## Message Text

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ACTION EA-09

INFO OCT-01 AS-01 ISO-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-04 H-01

INR-07 L-03 NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-01 PRS-01 SP-02

SS-15 USIA-06 TRSE-00 OMB-01 CU-02 EB-07 SIL-01

LAB-04 COME-00 AID-05 /076 W

-----080596 070444Z /10

P R 070250Z JUL 77

FM AMEMBASSY KUALA LUMPUR

TO SECSTATE WASHC PRIORITY 7853

INFO AMEMBASSY BANGKOK

AMEMBASSY JAKARTA

AMEMBASSY MANILA

AMEMBASSY SINGAPORE

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E.O.11652: N/A

TAGS: PINT, MY

SUBJECT: UMNO HOLDS ANNUAL GENERAL ASSEMBLY

1. SUMMARY. UMNO OPENED ITS ANNUAL GENERAL ASSEMBLY JULY 1 IN THE WAKE OF AGITATION BY SUPPORTERS OF DATUK HARUN TO RESTORE THEIR MAN TO THE PRESIDENCY OF UMNO YOUTH. AFTER PRIME MINISTER HUSSEIN ONN RALLIED THE PARTY WITH A CALL TO UNITY, THE ASSEMBLY ENDED WITH THE HARUN ISSUE SHELVED BUT NOT SOLVED. THE REAL TEST OF HUSSEIN'S UNITY THEME WILL COME AT NEXT YEAR'S MEETING WHEN PARTY ELECTIONS ARE DUE. END SUMMARY.

2. THE DOMINANT PARTY IN THE RULING NATIONAL FRONT, THE UNITED MALAYS NATIONAL ORGANIZATION (UMNO), HELD ITS SERIES OF ANNUAL MEETINGS FROM JUNE 30 TO JULY 3. THE UMNO YOUTH AND WOMEN'S GROUPS HELD THEIR ANNUAL ASSEMBLIES ON JUNE 30, AND THEY WERE FOLLOWED BY THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF THE WHOLE PARTY FROM JULY 1-3. THERE WERE NO ELECTIONS AT THIS YEAR'S MEETINGS DESPITE THE FACT THAT BOTH UMNO (PM HUSSEIN) AND UMNO YOUTH

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(HAJI SUHAIMI DATUK KAMARUDDIN) HAVE ONLY ACTING PRESIDENTS. THE UMNO OFFICERS AND SUPREME COUNCIL WERE ELECTED TO THREE-YEAR TERMS OF OFFICE AT THE 1975 GENERAL ASSEMBLY AND THE YOUTH OFFICERS AND EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE WERE ELECTED TO TWO-YEAR TERMS IN 1976, AND NEITHER ORGANIZATION MAKES PROVISIONS FOR INTERIM ELECTIONS. IN BOTH CASES THE DEPUTY PRESIDENT BECAME ACTING PRESIDENT ON THE DEATH OF THE PRESIDENT.

3. THE FEW WEEKS BUILDING UP TO THE CONVENING OF THE ANNUAL UMNO MEETINGS SAW OPEN FEUDING BETWEEN CERTAIN MEMBERS OF UMNO YOUTH AND THE ACTING PRESIDENT OF THE YOUTH, HAJI SUHAIMI. YOUTH ACTIVITIES, LED BY MEMBERS OF SELANGOR UMNO YOUTH, ACCUSED SUHAIMI, WHO IS HARUN'S NEPHEW, OF OBSTRUCTING THE EFFORT TO REHABILITATE FORMER UMNO YOUTH LEADER DATUK HARUN IDRIS. SUHAIMI'S PARTICULAR CRIME WAS A FAILURE TO DECLARE HIS INTENTION TO RESIGN FROM THE ACTING PRESIDENCY SO THAT HARUN COULD BE RE-ELECTED PRESIDENT AT A SPECIAL UMNO YOUTH GENERAL ASSEMBLY TO BE CALLED BEFORE THE ANNUAL MEETING. SUHAIMI, WHO TRAVELLED UP AND DOWN THE PENINSULA SECURING EXPRESSIONS OF SUPPORT FROM MOST YOUTH CHAPTERS, MAINTAINED THAT THERE WAS NO PROVISION IN THE PARTY CONSTITUTIONS FOR EITHER A SPECIAL ASSEMBLY OR A SPECIAL ELECTION.

4. AT THE UMNO YOUTH ASSEMBLY, IN FOUR HOURS OF HEATED DEBATE ON HOW TO HANDLE THE HARUN ISSUE, MOST DELEGATES AGREED THAT SOME KIND OF MOTION ENDORSING HARUN'S REHABILITATION SHOULD BE PASSED, BUT ONLY A MINORITY FAVORED SUHAIMI'S RESIGNATION AND AN EMERGENCY ELECTION TO GIVE HARUN BACK THE PRESIDENCY. HARUN DID NOT PARTICIPATE IN THE DEBATE (HE IS TOO OLD TO BE A MEMBER OF UMNO YOUTH; ONLY THE PRESIDENT CAN BE OLDER THAN 40), BUT HIS SELANGOR SUPPORTERS LED THE FIGHT TO REELECT HIM NOW. IN THE END THE ASSEMBLY PASSED BY A VOTE OF 182 TO 77 THE FOLLOWING RESOLUTION: "IN VIEW OF THE UMNO SUPREME LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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COUNCIL'S DECISION WHICH HAS ADVISED DATUK HARUN TO SEEK PARDON AND WHICH IS ALSO IN LINE WITH THE UMNO YOUTH NATIONAL EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE'S RESOLUTION TAKEN IN FEBRUARY, THE UMNO YOUTH GENERAL ASSEMBLY TODAY AGREES THAT THE MOVEMENT, WITHOUT AFFECTING THE PROCESS AND SOVEREIGNTY OF THE LAW, REFERS THE QUESTION OF REHABILITATION OF DATUK HARUN TO THE UMNO SUPREME COUNCIL SO THAT THE MATTER CAN BE RESOLVED AS SOON AS POSSIBLE."

5. IN AN HOUR-LONG SPEECH OPENING THE UMNO GENERAL ASSEMBLY, PM HUSSEIN STRESSED THE NEED FOR UNITY AND DEPLORED THOSE WHO WOULD SPLIT THE PARTY. WITHOUT MENTIONING ANYONE BY NAME, HE CITED SUCH "UNHEALTHY DEVELOPMENTS" AS ABUSE OF THE PARTY CONSTITUTION, ABUSE OF FREEDOM AND AUTHORITY, AND MAKING INTERNAL DISPUTES PUBLIC. SEVERAL TIMES HE WARNED AGAINST MEMBERS WHO GO AGAINST PARTY PROCEDURES OR PARTY DISCIPLINE. STRESSING THE UNITY THEME, HUSSEIN CITED FIVE ELEMENTS OF THE UMNO OBJECTIVE: (1) DEFENDING MALAYSIA'S INDEPENDENCE AND SOVEREIGNTY; (2) GUARANTEEING NATIONAL SECURITY; (3) STRENGTHENING SOLIDARITY AND MUTUAL UNDERSTANDING AMONG THE RACES; (4) SUCCESSFULLY IMPLEMENTING THE THIRD MALAYSIA PLAN, AND (5) ACHIEVING THE TARGETS OF THE NEW ECONOMIC POLICY.

6. IN A JULY 2 SPEECH, DATUK HARUN, WHO SOMEWHAT SURPRISINGLY HAD BEEN ELECTED SPOESMAN FOR THE SELANGOR DELEGATION TO THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY, POINTEDLY NOTED THAT THE DIFFERENCES OF OPINION NOW APPARENT IN UMNO SHOW ITS STRENGTH AND ARE NOT SOMETHING TO BE WORRIED ABOUT: "WE SURELY DO NOT WANT OUR MEMBERS TO BE MERE ROBOTS WITH NO MIND OF THEIR OWN. WE WANT OUR MEMBERS TO THINK FOR THEMSELVES." HARUN ALSO QUESTIONED WHETHER THE OBJECTIVE OF THE NEW ECONOMIC POLICY CAN EVER BE REACHED, AND SAID THAT THE PUBLIC CORPORATIONS SET UP TO GIVE THE MALAYS A SHARE IN THE MODERN ECONOMY ONLY BENEFIT A SMALL MINORITY OF THE MALAYS, THUS MAKING THE RICH RICHER AND THE POOR POORER. HARUN'S 45-MINUTE SPEECH--NORMALLY TEN MINUTES IS ALLOTTED EACH SPEAKER--INDIRECTLY ATTACKED THE MALAYSIAN CHINESE ASSOCIATION, THE MAJOR CHINESE PARTY IN THE NATIONAL FRONT, BY SAYING THAT THE LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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MCA'S TUNKU ABDUL RAHMAN COLLEGE AND MULTI-PURPOSE COOPERATIVE SOCIETY" COULD NEGATE GOVERNMENT EFFORTS TO BRIDGE THE ECONOMIC GAP BETWEEN THE MALAYS AND THE NON-MALAYS, AND THIS GAP WOULD FOREVER REMAIN WIDE."

7. ALTHOUGH THE HARUN ISSUE DOMINATED THE UMNO MEETINGS, OTHER ISSUES WERE DISCUSSED. UNLIKE LAST YEAR'S ASSEMBLIES, HELD JUST AFTER THE ARREST OF SAMAD ISMAIL, THERE WAS LITTLE DISCUSSION OF THE COMMUNIST SUBVERSIVE THREAT, ALTHOUGH HARUN'S SUPPORTERS DID ATTEMPT ONCE AGAIN TO PUT THE BLAME FOR HIS DOWNFALL ON COMMUNIST INFLUENCE IN THE GOVERNMENT. HOME AFFAIRS MINISTER TAN SRI GHAZALI SHAFIE, WHO GAINED MUCH POLITICAL MILEAGE OUT OF THE SAMAD AFFAIR LAST YEAR,

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INR-07 L-03 NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-01 PRS-01 SP-02  
SS-15 USIA-06 TRSE-00 OMB-01 CU-02 EB-07 LAB-04  
SIL-01 COME-00 AID-05 /076 W  
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FM AMEMBASSY KUALA LUMPUR

TO SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 7854  
INFO AMEMBASSY BANGKOK  
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AMEMBASSY MANILA  
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CONTENTED HIMSELF THIS YEAR WITH ANNOUNCING, THE DAY BEFORE THE MEETINGS STARTED, A SUCCESSFUL OPERATION AGAINST COMMUNIST PARTY OF MALAYA (CPM) SUPPORTERS WHICH HAD, IN FACT, BEEN WOUND UP FOR MORE THAN A YEAR. THE LABOR UNIONS CAME UNDER ATTACK FOR ATTEMPTING TO INTIMIDATE THE GOM WITH ITS RECENT SPATE OF STRIKE THREATS, PICKETING, AND "WORK-TO RULE" OPERATIONS. FINALLY, THE FREEMASONS, IN A CONTROVERSY VERY MUCH IN VOGUE NOW, WERE CONDEMNED BY MANY UMNO DELEGATES AS A ZIONIST CONSPIRACY.

8. COMMENT: THE SIGNIFICANCE OF THIS YEAR'S UMNO MEETINGS WAS THE EVIDENCE THEY PROVIDED THAT THE HARUN ISSUE, IF NOT HARUN'S POLITICAL FUTURE, REMAINS ALIVE. THE SELANGOR UMNO YOUTH EFFORT TO PROMOTE AN EARLY RE-ELECTION OF HARUN AS YOUTH PRESIDENT WAS A GAMBLE BY SOME OF HARUN'S MORE EMOTIONAL SUPPORTERS TO GIVE HIS COMEBACK CHANCES A QUICK FIX IN THE WAKE OF THE RECENT FEDERAL COURT DECISION TO UPHOLD ONE OF HIS CONVICTIONS. (THERE IS SOME EVIDENCE THAT THE MOVE DID NOT EVEN HAVE HARUN'S OWN WHOLE-HEARTED SUPPORT. HARUN REALIZES THAT LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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DATUK HUSSEIN AND OTHER IN THE UMNO LEADERSHIP CLEARLY DO NOT FAVOR HIS EARLY REHABILITATION AND WOULD PROBABLY HAVE VOIDED ANY SUCH ELECTION AS UNCONSTITUTIONAL. ALSO, SUHAIMI, WHO LED THE FIGHT IN UMNO YOUTH TO PUT DOWN THE RE-ELECTION PLOY, HAS NEVER BEEN KNOWN IN THE PAST TO DEFY HIS UNCLE.) THE DEFEAT OF THE SELANGOR EFFORT, HOWEVER, DOES NOT MEAN THAT HARUN IS GIVING ON A COMEBACK. HIS CHIDING OF PM HUSSEIN AND DEPUTY PRIME MINISTER MAHATHIR (WHO HAD OPENED THE YOUTH MEETING WITH HIS OWN CALL FOR UNITY) FOR TRYING TO FORCE CONFORMITY ON THE PARTY WAS CLEARLY DESIGNED TO KEEP THE HARUN OPTION ALIVE. THE UMNO YOUTH RESOLUTION TO REFER THE HARUN ISSUE TO THE SUPREME COUNCIL, WHICH HAS ALREADY WASHED ITS HANDS OF THE CASE BY SUGGESTING A ROYAL PARDON, WAS A DEVICE TO AVOID A DECISION NOW. BOTH SIDES ARE LOOKING TO NEXT YEAR WHEN PARTY ELECTIONS WILL BE THE TRUE TEST OF HARUN'S REMAINING SUPPORT IN THE PARTY AND HIS CHANCES FOR A RETURN TO POLITICAL POWER. (WE, INCIDENTALLY, CONTINUE TO FEEL THAT HARUN IS NOT A VIABLE CANDIDATE FOR HIGH PARTY OR PUBLIC OFFICE IN THE NEXT TWO OR THREE YEARS. HIS LEGAL RECORD WILL CONTINUE TO BE A FORMIDABLE OBSTACLE TO HOLDING PUBLIC

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## Message Attributes

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